Reviewer's report

**Title:** Delivering an Optimised Behavioural Intervention (OBI) to people with low back pain with high psychological risk; results and lessons learnt from a feasibility randomised controlled trial of Contextual Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CCBT) vs. Physiotherapy

**Version:** 2
**Date:** 18 February 2015

**Reviewer:** Silvano Ferrari

**Reviewer's report:**

**TITLE**
Delivering an Optimised Behavioural Intervention (OBI) to people with low back pain with high psychological risk; results and lessons learnt from a feasibility randomised controlled trial of Contextual Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CCBT) vs. Physiotherapy

**Authors**
Prof Tamar Pincus, Dr Shamaila Anwar, Prof Lance M McCracken, Prof Alison McGregor, Ms Liz Graham, Mrs Michelle Collinson, John McBeth, Paul Watson, Stephen Morley, Juliet Henderson, Prof Amanda J Farrin on behalf of the OBI Trial Management Team.

**Reviewer:** Silvano Ferrari

**Reviewer report**
I would like to give my compliments to the Authors for their work and for the continuous research in this field. I think that the preliminary results of the study have reinforced a combined physical and psychological treatment programme as a possible option, as indicated in NICE guidelines. I suggest you to include this consideration in the text.

**Major Compulsory Revisions**

1) **BACKGROUND** lines 32 – 38: This study has been designed for many aims and needs to be properly exposed to allow the reader to follow each step. In fact, there is little correspondence between the objectives of the work displayed at the end of the background and those written in the abstract.

I think that it could be better a closer correlation between exhibition objectives and results both in the abstract and in the background.

**Minor Essential Revisions**

1) **ABSTRACT:**

# line 20: I suggest to specify “….. acceptance more than physiotherapy alone (increase of …..”
# Conclusion: I suggest to add a second phrase, coherent with the study conclusions: “Our findings suggest also that a definitive trial should include a synthesis of PT & CCBT” or “The findings also suggest that there is room to improve delivery, through inclusion of physiotherapy in conjunction with CCBT”

2) BACKGROUND
# line 32: I suggest you to move this sentence below, in the primary or secondary objectives (depending on how the authors prefer)

3) METHODS
# Randomization and allocation concealment, line 3: could be better to report the type of randomization program.
# Trial Intervention, point 2 (Physiotherapy): The explanation of physiotherapy is generic too. To specify what is the other 40% (Manual Therapy? Massage?) and overall specify if the physiotherapic intervention have provided advice and information to promote self-management of patient’s low back pain.
In addition, as I suppose that in physiotherapic treatment wasn’t covered the CBT, this fact must be specified.

4) RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
# Recruitment, line 2: I think it has to be written that only the 29.6% of the questionnaire sent, have been returned.
# Participant’s characteristics: as the number of subjects that were “at home and not looking for work” and “unemployed and looking for work” were different too, could be better to refer this dates in this part of the text.
# Discussion: the results inherent the conjunction of CCBT and physiotherapy could be added in the ABSTRACT (Conclusion part)
I think it’s very important to stretch this fact, that enhance the NICE suggestions about the Combined physical and psychological treatment programme (point 1.7)
# Strengths and weaknesses, line 5: the phrase “The findings suggest that there is room to improve delivery” isn’t a strength or weakness point of the work but it has to be moved in the results or discussion part.
# Strengths and weaknesses: I suggest to include the fact that only 29.6% of the subjects returned the questionnaire is a weak point of the study. Can you try to give a possible explanation?
# Strengths and weaknesses, line 20: I think that the phrase “Our findings suggest that the best placed centers ……” could be moved in the results or discussion part.

• Discretionary Revisions

2) METHODS: Eligibility criteria, line 4: the authors should specify also in the text that the TSK was used in 17 items (not only in the table 3)
3) DATA COLLECTION line 4: RDQ. In the world is known as RMDQ
4) ANALYSES line 18: could be more complete by adding the initials of the two researchers
5) The readers do not know the Borkovec & Nau modified questions. Can you include them? Was it a numeric scale?

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:
'I declare that I have no competing interests'
Silvano Ferrari